

THE ATTACK ON LEVIATHAN: REGIONALISM AND NATIONALISM IN THE UNITED STATES. By Donald Davidson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938. 368 pp. \$3.00.

Donald Davidson is a member of the *Southern Agrarian* group of violent dissenters from the idea that progress lies along the pathway toward industrialization, urbanization, centralization, and ethnic fraternalization. If *The Attack on Leviathan* may be taken as representative of the present position of this group, however, there is considerable evidence of a swing away from the older, self-assertive and militant sectionalism toward the new regionalism as expounded by Howard W. Odum and his associates, centering around the University of North Carolina. More specifically, Davidson in this volume puts less stress on the nostalgic yearning for an Old South, *Sub*, which existed only in romantic imagination and seems more willing to admit that there are present-day problems which must be solved in terms of a modern world—or perhaps in terms of a world yet to come into being. This is indicated chiefly through his

commendatory restatement and review of the work of Odum and Rupert B. Vance particularly, but also in the liberal use of other regionalist, as opposed to sectionalist, authors and their ideas.

The book, indeed, might almost be characterized as a collection of reviews of books in the regional field, so closely does it follow one after another of those who have written on the subject. Indeed, this is one of the chief faults of the work of Davidson. Had he chosen to discuss the ideas in blocks rather than in terms of particular writers and their books, his contribution would have been more valuable and more pertinent.

The book opens with an exposition of the ideas of sectionalism and regionalism in which the shift of position is evident. A few years ago, it is suspected, Davidson would have insisted that the two terms were synonymous; now he traces the distinction. However, he later returns to his previously stated idea that the political aspect of regionalism must be sectionalism and approves the plea of Frank L. Owsley for intersectional tariffs on imported products. Later he asserts that the regionalists can achieve a nationally united effort only if they can discover "a 'moral equivalent' for sectionalism." "The South must either play sectional politics, or it must be still a dependent, hoping to receive a bounty on terms that will not be too disagreeable or humiliating . . ." (p. 310). His opinion of the effectiveness of regional doctrine in the field of practical politics is extremely low.

Other sections of the volume are devoted to discussions of the persistence of traditional culture patterns in various portions of the nation, relationships between urban and rural, the influence of the Wests, of regionalism in the arts and education; and the contributions of various Southern writers to these prob-

lems. There is a sort of appendix which consists of contrasted reviews of H. G. Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come* and George William Russell's *The Interpreters*; selected, no doubt, as presentations of the technological and mystical points of view. Davidson, of course, strongly favors Russell.

Throughout the book the yearning for a return to the "good old days" of the pre-Civil-War era is as apparent as the fear and distrust of the modern trend. What Davidson and his associates seem utterly unable to understand is that the southern "Bourbon" of today, who represents almost all that is repugnant to them, is the lineal descendant of the large slave master of their sanctified period. His clothing may be slightly different, but the lineaments of his countenance, and his habits and motives are very, very similar. Both then and now he sought and attained control of the society in which he lived; and by the same tricks of political and economic ruthless exploitation of whatever came within his grasp. It might also be pointed out, of course, that whether we like it or not social conditions do change and there is no satisfactory way yet devised to nullify the simple statement that *tempus fugit*. And in this country, at least, the flight of time has brought industrialization, urbanization, centralization, and a slight but observable trend toward ethnic fraternalization, the collective *bete noir* of the Agrarians. Hence the "Southern Liberals" such as Henry Grady, Walter Hines Page, Virginus Dabney, and Gerald Johnson are viewed with an eye heavy with suspicion that they are tools of the industrialists. Arthur Raper is evidently suspected of being an undercover man for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Howard W. Odum and his associates

are viewed more kindly; they see the South as it really is; "the good sociologist must be a regionalist" because "only through a regional study can he get at culture from the inside" (p. 300) but at the same time it may be just as well to reserve judgment since regionalism may turn out to be a disguise for servility or a tool of those who seek to erect a totalitarian state.

Professor Davidson has written a brilliant, but disappointing book. For page after page he gives every evidence of coming to realistic grips with his problem and of seeing it in its fundamental form. Then the picture of a factory smokestack or a Negro in a parlor-car rises before his eyes and blots out the insight he was about to gain. To exorcise such horrible nightmares, he immediately conjures up visions of the ante-bellum South of fanciful imagination; and is back in the mood of *I'll Take My Stand*. But throughout the present volume there is evidence that he may soon gain the will-power or the courage, whichever is lacking, to see the present southern portion of the United States as it is. If and when he does, he will combine the beautiful and persuasive literature he now produces with facts and logical conclusions which should do very much, indeed, to bring into being the sort of an America he hopes for.

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